FERTILITY 4

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The 2004 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) collected information on current and past fertility. A set of carefully worded questions to obtain accurate and reliable data on fertility was administered to measure fertility levels, trends, and differentials. The fertility measures presented here are calculated directly from the birth history. All women age 15-49 were asked to report on all live births. Questions were asked about children still living at home, those living elsewhere, and those who had died. The women were then asked the name, month, and year of birth, sex, survival status, current age (if alive), and age at death (if dead).

The accuracy of fertility data is affected primarily by underreporting of births (especially children who died in early infancy) and misreporting of the date of birth. Errors in underreporting of births affect the estimates of fertility levels, while misreporting of dates of births can distort estimates of fertility trends. If these errors vary by socioeconomic characteristics of the women, the differentials in fertility will also be affected.

4.1 CURRENT FERTILITY LEVELS AND TRENDS

4.1.1 Fertility Levels

The most commonly used measures of current fertility are the total fertility rate (TFR) and its components, age-specific fertility rates. The TFR is a summary measure of fertility and can be interpreted as the average number of births a hypothetical woman would have at the end of her reproductive life if she were subject to the currently prevailing age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) throughout her reproductive years (15-49). The ASFRs are a valuable measure of the age pattern of childbearing. They are defined as the number of live births to women in a particular age group divided by the number of woman-years in that age group during the specified period.

The TFR is the most significant demographic indicator in the analysis of the impact of national population programmes—in particular, family planning programmes—on individual or group reproductive behaviour. To reduce sampling errors and avoid possible problems of displacement of births, a three-year TFR was computed to provide the most recent estimates of current levels of fertility[1].

Table 4.1 presents the current TFRs and ASFRs for Malawi by urban-rural residence. The results indicate that a woman in Malawi would, on average, bear 6.0 children in her lifetime if fertility were to remain constant at the current age-specific rates measured in the survey (for the 36 months preceding the survey). The table also shows that urban women have lower fertility than their rural counterparts (4.2 children per woman compared with 6.4 children per woman), and lower

[1] Numerators of the ASFRs are calculated by summing the number of live births that occurred in the period 1 to 36 months preceding the survey (determined by the date of interview and the date of birth of the child) and classifying them by the age (in five-year groups) of the mother at the time of birth (determined by the mother's date of birth). The denominators of the rates are the number of woman-years lived in each of the specified five-year groups during the period 1 to 36 months preceding the survey.

urban fertility is observed across all age groups. The TFR measured from the 2004 MDHS (6.0) is slightly lower than the TFR measured in the 2000 MDHS (6.3). Examination of the age pattern of fertility rates show that the peak of childbearing in Malawi is at ages 20-24. The same age pattern was observed in the 2000 Malawi DHS.

Table 4.1 further shows a general fertility rate of 215 live births per 1,000 women age 15-44 years and a crude birth rate of 42 births per 1,000 population. Compared with other eastern and southern African countries that have participated in the DHS programme, Malawi still has one of the highest fertility rates (see Figure 4.1).

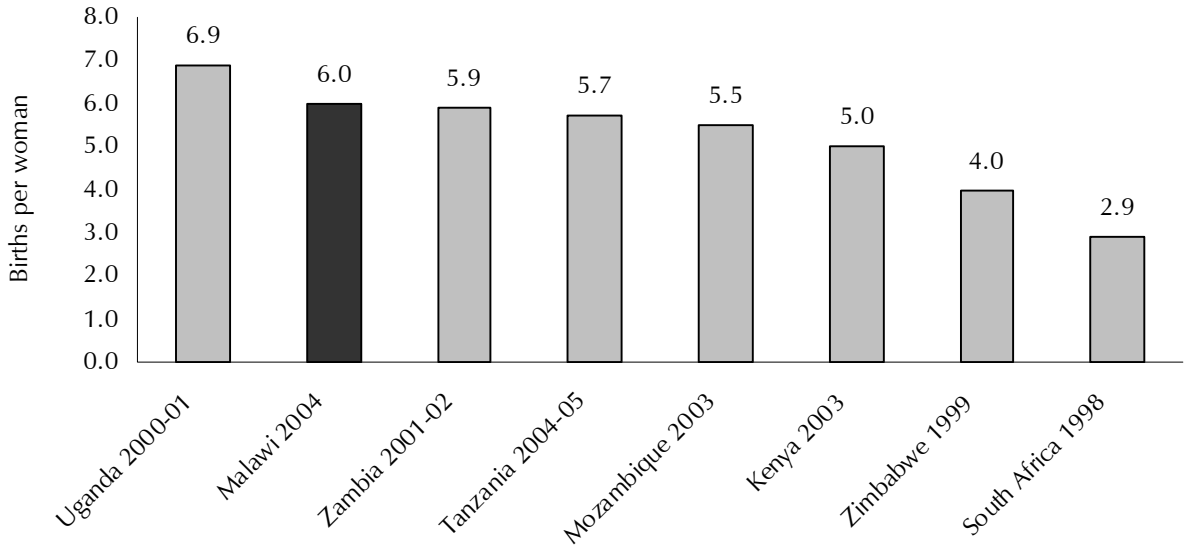
Table 4.1 Current fertility

Age-specific and cumulative fertility rates, the general fertility rate, and the crude birth rate for the three years preceding the survey, by urban-rural residence, Malawi 2004

	Residence		
Age group	Urban	Rural	Total
15-19	109	175	162
20-24	237	308	293
25-29	195	266	254
30-34	159	233	222
35-39	97	174	163
40-44	29	87	80
45-49	22	37	35
TFR	4.2	6.4	6.0
GFR	162	227	215
CBR	37.0	43.4	42.4

Note: Rates for age group 45-49 may be slightly biased due to truncation.
TFR: Total fertility rate for ages 15-49, expressed per woman
GFR: General fertility rate (births divided by the number of women age 15-44), expressed per 1,000 women
CBR: Crude birth rate, expressed per 1,000 population

Figure 4.1 Total Fertility Rates for Selected Sub-Saharan Countries



4.1.2 Fertility Differentials

This section examines associations between a woman's background characteristics and her fertility. Fertility varies by residence, educational background, and other background characteristics of a woman. Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show fertility differentials by urban-rural residence, region, education, wealth index quintile and by the ten oversampled districts. The analysis of the fertility differentials in this report is done using the TFR, percentage of currently pregnant women, and completed fertility in terms of the mean number of births to women age 40-49 by these characteristics.

As noted earlier, urban women have fewer children (average of 4.2 children per woman) than their rural counterparts (6.4 children per woman). This rural-urban difference in the TFR is the same as observed in the 2000 MDHS. There is substantial regional variation in the TFR between the Central and the other two regions. The TFR in the Central Region is 6.4 births per woman, while in the Southern and Northern regions it is 5.8 and 5.6 births per woman, respectively. Among the ten oversampled districts, The TFR varies from 4.8 births per woman in Blantyre to 7.2 per woman in Mangochi.

In addition to urban-rural, region, and district differentials, there are variations in TFR when measuring a woman's education and economic status (measured by the wealth index). Education consistently appears as an important variable in the analysis of fertility-related behaviour. Generally, the TFR declines as educational level increases. Women with no education or with primary education 1-4 have a TFR that is higher than that of women with primary education 5-8 and secondary or higher education levels (Table 4.2). A similar relationship is reflected in the association between fertility rates and the wealth index, which shows that women have fewer children as wealth

increases. The TFR for women in the lowest (poorest) quintile is 7.1 births per woman, compared with 4.1 births for women in the highest (richest) quintile.

Table 4.2 also shows that at the time of the survey 12 percent of women were pregnant. The proportion of pregnant women in urban areas, those with secondary and higher education, and women in the highest wealth quintile is lower than those for the other population subgroups.

Table 4.2 Fertility by background characteristics

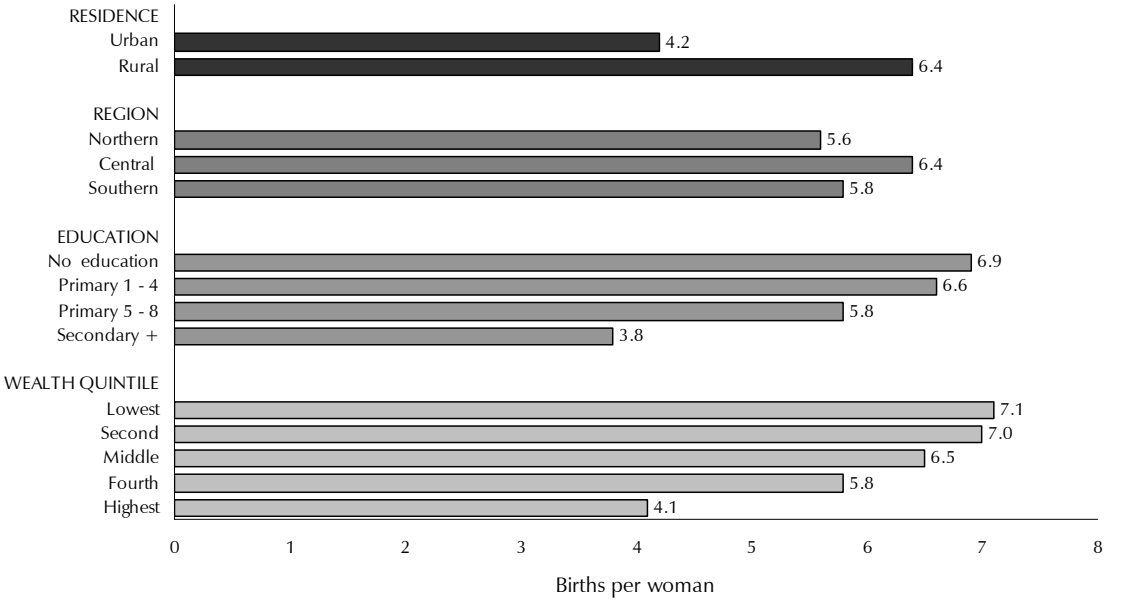
Total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey, percentage of women age 15-49 currently pregnant, and mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 years, by background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Total fertility rate[1]	Percentage currently pregnant[1]	Mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49
Residence			
Urban	4.2	8.9	5.7
Rural	6.4	12.8	6.7
Region			
Northern	5.6	11.2	6.6
Central	6.4	12.3	6.9
Southern	5.8	12.1	6.3
District			
Blantyre	4.8	11.9	5.4
Kasungu	7.0	12.5	7.4
Machinga	7.0	10.6	6.2
Mangochi	7.2	10.0	6.5
Mzimba	5.5	11.7	6.7
Salima	6.8	15.0	6.5
Thyolo	5.7	14.4	6.1
Zomba	5.3	12.1	6.1
Lilongwe	5.7	10.4	6.5
Mulanje	5.6	13.6	6.0
Other districts	6.3	12.5	6.8
Education			
No education	6.9	11.8	6.7
Primary 1-4	6.6	14.5	6.8
Primary 5-8	5.8	11.8	6.4
Secondary+	3.8	9.1	4.7
Wealth quintile			
Lowest	7.1	12.2	6.9
Second	7.0	14.1	6.5
Middle	6.5	14.4	6.8
Fourth	5.8	12.1	6.8
Highest	4.1	8.1	5.7
Total	6.0	12.1	6.5

[1] Women age 15-49 years

The last column in Table 4.2 shows the mean number of children ever born (CEB) to women age 40-49. This is an indicator of cumulative fertility; it reflects the fertility performance of older women who are nearing the end of their reproductive period and thus represents completed fertility. If fertility had remained stable over time, the two fertility measures, TFR and CEB, would be equal or similar. The findings show that the mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 (6.5 children per woman) is slightly higher than the TFR for the 3 years preceding the survey (6.0 children per woman), suggesting a slight recent reduction in fertility.

Figure 4.2 Total Fertility Rate by Background Characteristics



MDHS 2004

4.1.3 Trends in Fertility

The trend in fertility can be assessed by comparing the current TFR with estimates from previous DHS surveys. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 and Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show changes in fertility rates across four surveys that were conducted in Malawi since the early 1980s: the 1984 Family Formation Survey (FFS), the 1992 MDHS, the 2000 MDHS, and the 2004 MDHS. Direct estimates of fertility for the three years preceding the survey have been used in this comparison, because a three-year rate is more robust than rates based on a shorter period of time. The TFR substantially declined from 7.6 children per woman in the 1984 FFS to 6.7 children per woman in 1992 MDHS, to 6.0 children per woman in 2004. This is a 1.5 child drop in fertility over two decades. Table 4.3 shows that since 1984 fertility has fallen primarily in older age groups (30 and above). The pace of fertility decline varied, but was fastest between 1984 and 1992 and between 2000 and 2004.

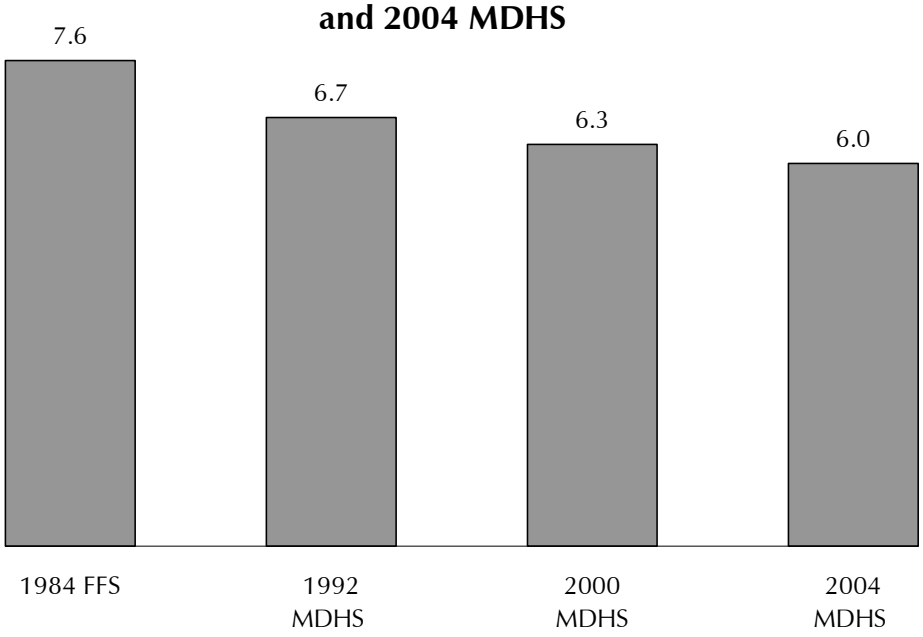
Table 4.3 Trends in age-specific fertility rates

Age-specific fertility rates (per 1,000 women) and total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey, Malawi 1984-2004

Age group	1984 FFS[1]	1992 MDHS	2000 MDHS	2004 MDHS
15-19	202	161	172	162
20-24	319	287	305	293
25-29	309	269	272	254
30-34	273	254	219	222
35-39	201	197	167	163
40-44	129	120	94	80
45-49	83	58	41	35
TFR	7.6	6.7	6.3	6.0

[1] Data from the Family Formation Survey (FFS) are based on the four years preceding the survey.

Figure 4.3 Trends in the Total Fertility Rate 1984 FFS, 1992 MDHS, 2000 MDHS, and 2004 MDHS



Note: Rates refer to the 3-year period preceding the survey, except for the FFS rate, which is for the 4-year period before the survey.

Figure 4.4 Trends in Age-Specific Fertility Rates 1984 FFS, 1992 MDHS, 2000 MDHS, and 2004 MDHS

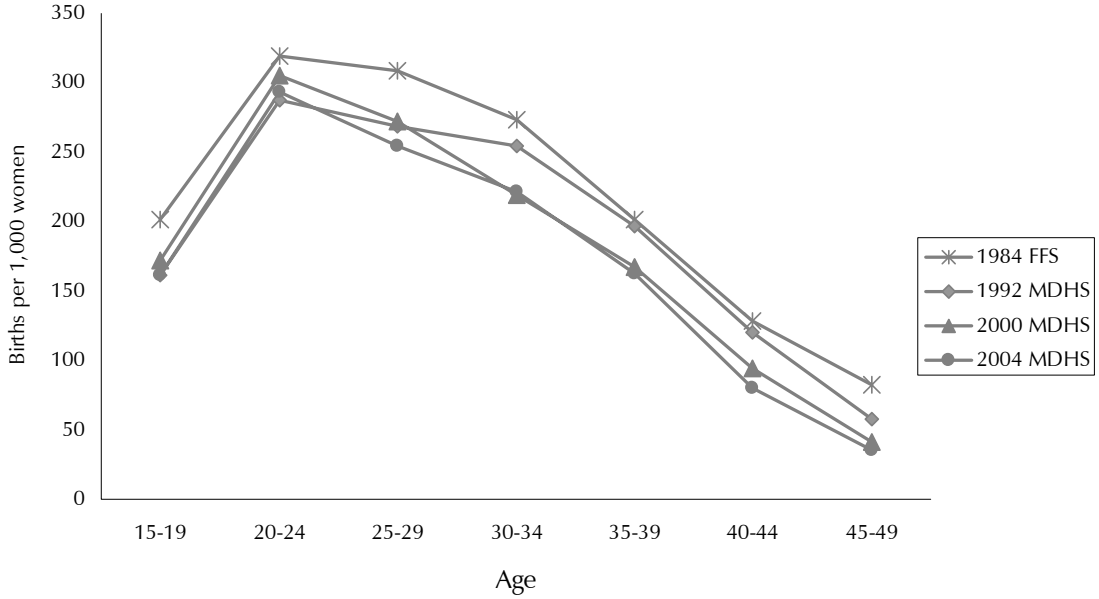


Table 4.4 Trends in fertility by background characteristics

Total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, Malawi 1992, 2000, and 2004

Background characteristic	1992 MDHS	2000 MDHS	2004 MDHS
Residence			
Urban	5.5	4.5	4.2
Rural	6.9	6.7	6.4
Region			
Northern	6.7	6.2	5.6
Central	7.4	6.8	6.4
Southern	6.2	6.0	5.8
District			
Blantyre	na	4.3	4.8
Kasungu	na	7.0	7.0
Machinga	na	7.0	7.0
Mangochi	na	7.4	7.2
Mzimba	na	6.7	5.5
Salima	na	6.7	6.8
Thyolo	na	5.3	5.7
Zomba	na	6.2	5.3
Lilongwe	na	6.5	5.7
Mulanje	na	5.5	5.6
Other districts	na	6.8	6.3
Education			
No education	7.2	7.3	6.9
Primary 1-4	6.7	6.7	6.6
Primary 5-8	6.2	6.0	5.8
Secondary+	4.4	3.0	3.8
Total	6.7	6.3	6.0

na = Not applicable

Further information on fertility trends comes from the analysis of the fertility of age cohorts of women (i.e., by examining trends within age groups). Table 4.5 shows age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) for successive five-year periods preceding the survey. Examining the 10-14 year, 5-9 year and 0-4 year periods preceding the survey, a decline is seen in the ASFRs for each period. Since women age 50 and above were not interviewed in the survey, the rates are truncated as the number of years before the survey increases.

Table 4.5 Trends in age-specific fertility rates

Age-specific fertility rates for five-year periods preceding the survey, by mother's age at the time of the birth, Malawi 2004

Mother's age at birth	Number of years preceding survey			
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19
15-19	160	164	181	176
20-24	291	296	320	292
25-29	252	274	302	296
30-34	222	226	275	[261]
35-39	162	169	[239]	-
40-44	88	[129]	-	-
45-49	[38]	-	-	-

Note: Age-specific fertility rates are per 1,000 women. Estimates in brackets are truncated.

4.2 CHILDREN EVER BORN AND CHILDREN SURVIVING

Table 4.6 presents the distribution of all women and currently married women by the number of children ever born (CEB). The table also shows the mean number of children ever born and the mean number of living children for each five-year age group. The distribution of children ever born is the outcome of lifetime fertility. Information on lifetime fertility is useful for examining the momentum of childbearing and for estimating levels of primary infertility. The number of children ever born (CEB) or current parity is based on a cross-sectional view at the time of survey. It does not refer directly to the timing of fertility of the individual respondent but is a measure of her completed fertility.

Table 4.6 Children ever born and living

Percent distribution of all women and currently married women by number of children ever born (CEB), and mean number of children ever born and mean number of living children, according to age group, Malawi 2004

	Number of children ever born														
Age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+	Total	Number of women	Mean number of CEB	Mean number of living children
ALL WOMEN															
15-19	74.7	21.3	3.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	2,392	0.30	0.26
20-24	15.8	32.1	33.0	15.4	2.9	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	2,870	1.60	1.40
25-29	4.9	9.4	21.1	29.3	22.6	9.0	2.9	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	2,157	2.99	2.54
30-34	2.6	5.0	7.1	13.3	23.9	22.9	15.6	6.3	2.0	1.1	0.1	100.0	1,478	4.35	3.60
35-39	2.2	2.9	5.0	7.2	12.3	15.9	18.6	14.9	11.2	6.5	3.1	100.0	1,117	5.60	4.55
40-44	1.3	2.9	4.3	6.3	8.4	12.6	14.1	14.2	15.6	10.1	10.2	100.0	935	6.33	5.01
45-49	2.1	2.7	5.4	5.3	6.6	8.0	13.9	11.3	12.4	12.1	20.1	100.0	749	6.83	5.19
Total	20.8	15.3	14.8	12.4	10.2	7.8	6.3	4.2	3.4	2.3	2.4	100.0	11,698	3.03	2.49
CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN															
15-19	39.7	49.7	9.9	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	788	0.72	0.63
20-24	8.0	33.6	36.6	17.7	3.2	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	2,283	1.78	1.55
25-29	2.7	8.3	20.9	30.4	23.9	9.7	3.1	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	1,814	3.11	2.67
30-34	1.9	4.0	6.6	12.5	24.2	22.9	16.9	7.1	2.4	1.3	0.1	100.0	1,225	4.50	3.76
35-39	1.9	2.6	4.5	5.8	11.9	16.5	19.3	16.5	11.0	7.0	3.1	100.0	903	5.73	4.66
40-44	1.1	3.0	3.6	4.9	7.6	12.6	13.3	14.6	17.1	11.0	11.3	100.0	754	6.54	5.18
45-49	1.6	1.1	4.2	4.9	6.2	8.5	14.1	10.3	11.5	12.5	25.1	100.0	545	7.23	5.49
Total	7.2	17.0	17.6	14.8	12.1	9.3	7.4	5.0	3.9	2.8	3.0	100.0	8,312	3.59	2.96

Table 4.6 shows that one out of every five women does not have any children, while among married women the proportion is only 7 percent. While three in four women age 15-19 have no children, six in ten married women age 15-19 have started childbearing. Since voluntary childlessness is rare in Malawi, it is assumed that married women with no births by the time they reach the end of their reproductive years are infertile, or their husbands are. The percentage of women who are childless at the end of the reproductive period is an indirect measure of primary infertility (the proportion of women who are unable to bear children at all). The data show that less than two percent of married women remain childless by their 40s.

Table 4.6 also shows that on average, women have given birth to more than one child by their early 20s, about 3 children by their late 20s, and about 7 children by the end of their reproductive period. Overall, the mean number of children ever born is 3.0 children for all women

and 3.6 children for currently married women. There is a slight difference in the mean number of children ever born between all women and currently married women at all ages.

In addition to giving a description of average family size, information on CEB and number of children surviving also gives some indication on the extent of childhood mortality. The 2004 MDHS results indicate that on average, all women have over two surviving children, and currently married women have three children. The difference between the mean number of CEB and mean number of children still living for the two groups of women increases with a woman's age. By the end of the reproductive period, women have lost, on average, almost two of the children they had given birth to.

4.3 BIRTH INTERVALS

The study of birth intervals is important in understanding the health status of young children. That women with closely spaced births have higher fertility than women with longer birth intervals has been observed in many countries. It has also been shown that short birth intervals, particularly those less than 24 months, elevate risks of death for both children on either side of the interval; maternal health is also jeopardised when births are closely spaced. The study of birth intervals is done using two measures, namely median birth interval and proportion of non–first births that are born with an interval of 24 months or more after the previous birth. Table 4.7 shows the percent distribution of non-first births in the five years preceding the survey by number of months since preceding birth, according to selected demographic and socioeconomic variables. In general, the median length of birth interval in Malawi is 36 months. While 25 percent of births were born four or more years after a previous birth, 15 percent of births occur within two years of a previous birth, and five percent of births occur less than 18 months since the previous birth.

Table 4.7 Birth intervals

Percent distribution of non-first births in the five years preceding the survey by number of months since preceding birth, according to background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Months since preceding birth					Total	Number of non-first births	Median number of months since preceding birth
	7-17	18-23	24-35	36-47	48+			
Age								
15-19	11.4	21.8	41.3	24.9	0.6	100.0	103	27.2
20-29	5.6	11.4	40.5	25.9	16.6	100.0	4,543	33.9
30-39	4.1	8.0	30.4	24.9	32.6	100.0	2,789	38.6
40-49	3.8	7.5	20.5	22.8	45.4	100.0	785	44.9
Birth order								
2-3	5.0	10.9	39.4	25.6	19.2	100.0	3,922	34.4
4-6	4.1	8.6	33.2	25.5	28.5	100.0	3,014	37.1
7+	7.2	10.6	26.7	23.7	31.7	100.0	1,283	37.8
Sex of preceding birth								
Male	5.7	9.4	34.9	25.2	24.9	100.0	4,074	36.0
Female	4.4	10.6	35.4	25.4	24.3	100.0	4,145	35.9
Survival of preceding birth								
Living	2.9	9.0	36.1	26.4	25.6	100.0	6,972	36.5
Dead	17.0	15.4	29.7	19.2	18.6	100.0	1,247	30.5
Residence								
Urban	4.4	9.5	33.4	23.6	29.0	100.0	946	36.9
Rural	5.1	10.1	35.4	25.5	24.0	100.0	7,273	35.8
Region								
Northern	3.1	7.0	37.3	28.7	23.9	100.0	1,015	36.5
Central	5.7	11.5	35.8	23.9	23.1	100.0	3,460	34.9
Southern	5.0	9.4	34.0	25.6	26.1	100.0	3,744	36.4
District								
Blantyre	5.6	8.5	28.2	25.9	31.8	100.0	537	38.8
Kasungu	4.8	11.5	36.6	27.7	19.3	100.0	428	35.3
Machinga	5.1	12.0	36.1	23.4	23.4	100.0	358	34.6
Mangochi	5.0	10.1	36.9	23.3	24.6	100.0	499	35.4
Mzimba	3.5	5.5	37.5	28.5	25.0	100.0	519	36.7
Salima	6.4	10.3	34.9	24.2	24.2	100.0	247	35.2
Thyolo	3.3	11.6	34.7	25.7	24.7	100.0	452	36.1
Zomba	5.7	7.9	32.6	27.7	26.0	100.0	397	37.0
Lilongwe	5.6	12.8	35.3	21.8	24.4	100.0	1,083	34.7
Mulanje	4.7	10.8	31.2	26.5	26.8	100.0	340	37.2
Other districts	5.0	9.5	36.1	25.6	23.7	100.0	3,359	35.8
Education								
No education	4.9	9.7	33.9	23.8	27.6	100.0	2,617	36.5
Primary 1-4	5.3	11.2	35.5	26.4	21.6	100.0	2,428	35.3
Primary 5-8	4.6	9.6	36.7	25.8	23.2	100.0	2,602	35.7
Secondary or higher	5.9	8.2	31.8	25.0	29.1	100.0	571	37.1
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	5.4	10.4	33.6	24.5	26.1	100.0	1,659	36.2
Second	6.3	10.2	35.5	24.7	23.2	100.0	1,852	35.2
Middle	4.5	9.5	39.2	25.1	21.8	100.0	1,891	35.1
Fourth	4.6	10.6	35.7	27.8	21.3	100.0	1,632	35.7
Highest	3.9	9.3	29.5	24.1	33.3	100.0	1,186	38.6
Total	5.0	10.0	35.1	25.3	24.6	100.0	8,219	35.9

Note: First-order births are excluded. The interval for multiple births is the number of months since the preceding pregnancy that ended in a live birth.

In general, the results indicate that younger women (mostly adolescents) have shorter birth intervals than older women in Malawi. As age increases, the median length of birth interval also

increases. There are no strong differentials in median birth interval by region. District variation ranges from 34.6 months in Machinga to 38.8 months in Blantyre.

4.4 AGE OF MOTHERS AT FIRST BIRTH

The onset of childbearing is an important fertility indicator. Women who marry early are typically exposed to pregnancy for a longer period, and early childbearing often takes place, the combination of which generally leads to a large family size. The age at which childbearing commences is an important determinant of the overall level of fertility as well as the health and welfare of the mother and the child. In some societies, postponement of first births due to an increase in age at marriage has contributed to overall fertility decline. However, in Malawi, it is not uncommon for women to have children before getting married.

Table 4.8 shows the percentage of women who have given birth by specified ages and the median age at first birth, according to current age. The results show that the initiation of childbearing has not changed much over time. Data from the 2000 MDHS show almost the same pattern, suggesting that there has been no significant change in age at first birth in Malawi in the recent past years. Table 4.8 shows that the median age at first birth has not changed in the past decades. The higher median age at first birth for the oldest cohort (19.4 years) may be affected by recall lapse. The results indicate that women are delaying having their first child. While 8 percent of women age 45-49 had their first child by age 15, less than 2 percent of women age 15-19 did so. The percentage of women who had their first child by age 18 years is highest among women age 35-39 (42 percent) and lowest among women age 45-49 (33 percent).

Table 4.8 Age at first birth

Among all women, percentage who gave birth by exact age, and median age at first birth, by current age, Malawi 2004

Current age	Percentage who gave birth by exact age					Percentage who have never given birth	Number of women	Median age at first birth
	15	18	20	22	25			
15-19	1.5	na	na	na	na	74.7	2,392	a
20-24	4.6	34.1	63.2	na	na	15.8	2,870	19.0
25-29	5.6	33.8	64.2	82.8	92.7	4.9	2,157	19.0
30-34	7.9	37.8	64.8	81.9	92.7	2.6	1,478	18.9
35-39	11.4	41.6	63.6	80.0	91.1	2.2	1,117	18.8
40-44	8.4	38.2	64.2	80.9	92.4	1.3	935	18.9
45-49	8.0	33.1	55.2	73.2	84.9	2.1	749	19.4

na = Not applicable
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of women had a birth before reaching the beginning of the age group

4.5 MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST BIRTH BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Age at first birth varies by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the woman. Table 4.9 shows the median age at first birth among women age 20-49 years and 25-49 years, by current age and background characteristics. The median age at first birth for women age 20-49 for Malawi is 19.0 years. Urban women have their first birth half a year later than their rural counterparts. Across regions, first births in the Central Region occur later than in the Southern and

Northern Regions (19.4 years compared to 19.0 years or younger). For the oversampled districts, the median age at first birth ranges from 18.4 years in Mulanje and Thyolo to 19.6 years in Lilongwe.

Age at first birth increases with education. The data also show that women who belong to the wealthiest quintile have their first child about a year later than women in most other wealth quintiles.

Table 4.9 Median age at first birth by background characteristics

Median age at first birth among women age 20-49 years, by current age and background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Current age						Women age 20-49	Women age 25-49
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49		
Residence								
Urban	20.0	19.6	18.8	19.1	18.7	19.3	19.5	19.2
Rural	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.7	18.9	19.5	18.9	18.9
Region								
Northern	18.7	19.0	19.0	19.4	19.4	19.0	19.0	19.2
Central	19.6	19.3	19.0	19.2	19.1	19.9	19.4	19.3
Southern	18.7	18.7	18.8	18.0	18.5	19.1	18.7	18.7
District								
Blantyre	18.8	18.8	18.9	18.3	17.8	18.9	18.7	18.6
Kasungu	19.1	18.8	18.6	19.2	19.0	19.1	18.9	18.9
Machinga	18.3	18.3	19.0	18.8	18.5	20.2	18.6	18.7
Mangochi	18.2	18.3	18.4	18.6	18.6	20.5	18.5	18.6
Mzimba	18.9	19.3	19.2	19.6	19.4	20.0	19.2	19.4
Salima	19.3	19.0	18.6	20.0	19.8	19.5	19.2	19.1
Thyolo	18.0	18.5	19.2	18.6	19.0	17.9	18.4	18.7
Zomba	19.0	19.1	18.6	17.9	18.2	18.8	18.8	18.6
Lilongwe	a	19.5	18.9	19.4	18.8	20.5	19.6	19.4
Mulanje	18.4	18.4	18.7	17.9	18.0	19.1	18.4	18.4
Other districts	19.2	19.1	19.1	18.5	19.1	19.4	19.1	19.0
Education								
No education	17.8	18.2	18.5	18.0	18.8	19.7	18.4	18.5
Primary 1-4	18.5	18.9	19.1	18.2	18.3	19.4	18.7	18.8
Primary 5-8	18.8	18.9	18.9	19.0	19.0	19.0	18.9	18.9
Secondary+	a	21.6	22.2	21.4	21.7	19.6	a	21.6
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	18.8	19.0	18.8	17.9	18.7	20.1	18.8	18.8
Second	18.8	19.0	18.3	18.7	19.0	19.7	18.9	18.9
Middle	18.7	18.5	18.8	18.6	18.6	19.1	18.7	18.7
Fourth	19.1	19.0	19.3	18.4	19.1	19.2	19.0	19.0
Highest	a	19.8	19.3	19.6	18.9	19.3	19.7	19.5
Total	19.0	19.0	18.9	18.8	18.9	19.4	19.0	19.0

a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the women had a birth before reaching the beginning of the age group

4.6 ADOLESCENT FERTILITY

Adolescent childbearing has potentially negative demographic and social consequences. Children born to very young mothers face an increased risk of illness and death. This may be due to the fact that teenage mothers are more likely to suffer from pregnancy and delivery complications than older mothers, resulting in higher morbidity and mortality for both themselves and their

children. In addition, early childbearing may foreclose a teenager's ability to pursue educational or job opportunities.

Table 4.10 shows the percentage of women age 15-19 who are mothers or pregnant with their first child, by background characteristics. One in three adolescents has begun childbearing; one in four has already had a child and a further 9 percent are currently pregnant. There is a substantial difference in childbearing among teenagers who live in urban and rural areas (25 percent compared with 36 percent, respectively). At the regional level, the proportion of teenagers who have started childbearing is highest in the Southern Region (40 percent) compared with the Northern Region (33 percent) and the Central Region (28 percent). Among the oversampled districts, Mangochi has the highest proportion of teenagers who have started childbearing (48 percent), while Lilongwe District has the lowest (25 percent).

Table 4.10 Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood

Percentage of women age 15-19 who are mothers or pregnant with their first child, by background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Percentage who are: Mothers	Pregnant with first child	Percentage who have begun childbearing	Number of women
Age				
15	1.4	1.8	3.2	445
16	6.0	5.5	11.5	467
17	21.9	8.8	30.7	427
18	37.8	12.1	49.9	554
19	53.9	14.0	67.9	499
Residence				
Urban	18.2	6.6	24.8	455
Rural	27.0	9.2	36.2	1,937
Region				
Northern	24.9	7.7	32.7	371
Central	20.1	7.9	28.1	972
Southern	30.3	9.8	40.1	1,049
District				
Blantyre	27.1	9.9	37.0	187
Kasungu	19.3	8.7	28.0	100
Machinga	29.1	11.0	40.1	83
Mangochi	43.3	4.7	48.0	114
Mzimba	24.1	9.4	33.5	182
Salima	20.4	11.6	32.0	51
Thyolo	29.8	14.7	44.4	120
Zomba	29.2	9.2	38.4	133
Lilongwe	18.3	6.3	24.6	334
Mulanje	28.6	14.7	43.3	96
Other districts	24.7	8.0	32.7	993
Education				
No education	48.8	14.3	63.1	132
Primary 1-4	32.2	9.6	41.8	580
Primary 5-8	24.4	8.9	33.2	1,196
Secondary+	13.2	5.7	18.9	484
Wealth quintile				
Lowest	32.6	10.7	43.2	395
Second	36.1	10.7	46.9	412
Middle	25.4	10.4	35.8	444
Fourth	23.6	8.4	32.0	511
Highest	15.1	5.3	20.4	629
Total	25.3	8.7	34.1	2,392

The results further show that there is a negative relationship between adolescent childbearing and both educational level and wealth status. For example, while 63 percent of adolescents with no education have begun childbearing, the proportion for those with at least secondary education is just 19 percent. Adolescents in the lowest wealth quintile are also more than twice as likely to have begun childbearing compared with those in the wealthiest quintile.